

## **Migratory Bird Assessment**

Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the Forest Service is directed to “provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives.” (P.L. 94-588, Sec 6 (g) (3) (B)). Direction for integrating migratory bird conservation into forest management and planning includes the January 2000 USDA Forest Service (FS) Landbird Conservation Strategic Plan; the Partners in Flight (PIF) Landbird Conservation Plan (Rosenberg et al. 2016); Executive Order 13186 (2001); and the 2017 Department of Interior Solicitor’s Opinion M-37050.

Within the National Forests, migratory bird conservation focuses on providing a diversity of bird habitats at multiple spatial and temporal scales over the long-term. Our actions also include promoting migratory bird conservation through enhanced collaboration and cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Service as well as other federal, state, tribal and local governments.

The Stanislaus National Forest is proposing to manage lands within the Social and Ecological Resilience Across the Landscape (SERAL) project area (refer to the project EIS for details). Proposed management is intended to implement direction contained within the Stanislaus National Forest Land Management Plan (LRMP, USDA 1991), as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS, USDA 2004). The STF “Forest Plan Direction” presents the current Forest Plan management direction, based on the original Forest Plan as modified through the Forest Plan appeals and amendment processes (USDA 2017). The SERAL project also contains several Forest Plan amendments (refer to the project EIS for details) that are intended to utilize the best available science from the Conservation Strategy for the California Spotted Owl in the Sierra Nevada (USDA 2019). The intent of the project is to reduce the risk of high severity fire and increase landscape resiliency. Opportunities to promote conservation of migratory birds and their habitats in the project area were considered during the development, design, and implementation of the project.

The Draft Avian Conservation Plan for the Sierra Nevada Bioregion identified montane meadows, riparian habitat, late successional/old growth forest and oak woodlands as priority habitats for conservation (Siegel and DeSante 1999). All these habitat types are within or adjacent to the project area and the proposed management actions will help sustain them by reducing the probability of largescale high severity fire.

Potential effects to migratory birds, including bird species of conservation concern, have been considered and assessed as follows:

The project actions provide long-term net benefits by increasing habitat diversity and sustainability. Although some actions may have short-term adverse effects on some individual birds, we do not expect adverse effects at the population level. Potential adverse effects to migratory bird species have been minimized through the adherence of LRMP Standards and Guidelines including: riparian buffers, large tree retention requirements, canopy cover requirements, snag/down woody debris retention, and other measures.

Adoption of measures in the California Spotted Owl Conservation Strategy (2019), and managing the landscape toward the Natural Range of Variation (NRV), will help develop resilient habitats for migratory birds and better align the landscape with the conditions and processes under which migratory birds evolved.

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